MULTI AWARD WINNING!

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THE WORLD'S BEST NEWS & FACTS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

SPORTS
US skating champions crowned
p18

NEWS
Nutrition guidelines are revised
p4

ANIMALS
Another reason to love dogs
p11

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Making sense of the world

THE WEEK Junior

THE BEST MAGAZINE FOR CURIOUS KIDS

GOLDEN!

KPop Demon Hunters wins big at the Golden Globe Awards p5

OUR 300TH ISSUE!

People demonstrating against ICE in Minneapolis on January 10

DID YOU KNOW?
Minneapolis and St. Paul are neighboring cities in Minnesota that form the metropolitan area known as the Twin Cities.

Actors speak out

On January 11, celebrities attending the Golden Globe Awards in Los Angeles, California, protested ICE and the death of Renee Good. Movie and TV stars including Mark Ruffalo, Natasha Lyonne, and Wanda Sykes wore pins with the words "Be Good" and "ICE Out" at the event.

Anti-ICE protests across US

Thousands of people took part in more than 1,000 demonstrations across the US on January 10 and 11. They were protesting actions by the US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agency and the death of a woman named Renee Good during a confrontation with ICE in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Protesters called the coordinated demonstrations "ICE Out for Good."

What is ICE?

The agency implements the US government's efforts to deport (remove from the country) people from other countries who are in the US without legal permission. ICE agents are authorized to stop and arrest people they believe may be in the US without proper documentation. President Donald Trump has made this a main priority of his second term. Since he took office in January 2025, agents armed with guns have detained thousands of people they believe are undocumented immigrants. However, the agency has faced criticism due to the aggressive nature of the sweeps and because agents have arrested and detained US citizens and other people in the country legally.

A memorial for Renee Good

How have people responded to ICE?

Since the raids began, thousands of people around the US who are opposed to ICE's actions have tried to help undocumented immigrants. People track ICE activity in their area, use whistles to warn others of potential raids, inform people of their legal rights, and record interactions with ICE on their phones. They also attempt to impede ICE agents by forming a crowd or blocking them with their cars.

What happened in Minneapolis?

On January 7, Minneapolis resident Renee Good, age 37, was trying to help undocumented people during an ICE enforcement operation. Good, a poet and mother of three, was in her car when she had a verbal exchange with ICE agents who told her to get out. She did not and tried to drive off. As she did, ICE agent Jonathan Ross, who was near the front of the car, shot and killed her. Although many videos of the incident have been released and scrutinized, opinions are divided on who is responsible for the shooting. Federal officials called Good a "domestic terrorist" and said Ross acted in self-defense because Good was trying to hit him with her car. Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey called those claims "garbage," and Minnesota Governor Tim Walz called them "verifiably false." While some people said Ross was justified in shooting Good, others said she was steering her car away from him when he fired and his actions were unjustified.

How did people react?

Within hours of Good's death, people began to protest in the streets of Minneapolis. They called for Ross to face criminal charges and for ICE to leave the city. On January 10, thousands of people marched in Minneapolis. The movement spread, and on January 10 and 11 marches took place in California, Washington, Oregon, Texas, Nebraska, New York, Massachusetts, and other states. On January 12, about 800 high school students in Minneapolis walked out of class to protest ICE in the city. A student named Peyton said the walkout sent an important message. "It shows that there are people who aren't accepting what's happening and that it is wrong," she said.

What will happen next?

When *The Week Junior* went to press on January 14, about 1,000 more ICE agents had been sent to Minneapolis, and tensions between ICE and community members were high. US officials said they had begun an investigation into Good and her family but would not examine Ross's actions. Many people criticized this decision, and six federal lawyers in Minnesota resigned in protest. State and local officials said they were blocked from the federal inquiry and had begun their own. Minnesota filed a lawsuit against the US government, calling for ICE to leave the state. More protests are expected around the country and at local schools.

Uprising grows throughout Iran

Widespread protests against the government have intensified in Iran as citizens in all 31 provinces express anger over a troubled economy and restrictions on personal freedoms. The government has deployed security forces, which are using violence to stop protesters. On January 8, the government shut down access to the internet, phones, and other communication methods.

The protests began with shopkeepers in December, after a sudden drop in the value of Iran's money and a sharp increase in prices of goods. The movement grew into a demand for a new government. The nation is run by religious leaders who impose strict laws, including banning any criticism of the government and limiting the right to assemble and exercise free speech.

Reports said thousands of people have been killed in government crackdowns and thousands more have been arrested. As people in the US, Turkey, Spain, and other countries demonstrated in support of the protesters, President Donald Trump said the US may intervene to stop the government.

Hari Budha Magar at the peak of Mount Vinson

FACT FILE
Mount Kilimanjaro in Africa is not part of a mountain range, making it the largest free-standing mountain in the world.

Mountain climbing record set

Hari Budha Magar, a military veteran from Nepal, reached the top of Mount Vinson in Antarctica on January 8, successfully completing the "seven summits" challenge of climbing the tallest mountain on each of the world's seven continents. Magar, age 46, also set a record as the first person with both legs amputated (removed) above the knee to accomplish the challenge.

Born into poverty in Nepal, Magar joined the British Army at age 19. In 2010, he was stationed in Afghanistan when he lost both legs in an explosion. Afterward, Magar struggled to readjust to life. He was fitted with prosthetic (artificial) legs and slowly learned to walk again. In time, he decided to pursue his childhood dream of becoming a mountaineer.

Magar trained for five years. He also had to convince experts to make special prosthetic limbs and other gear for him to climb in harsh conditions at the top of the tallest mountains in the world. In 2019, he reached the top of Mount Blanc in Europe. He went on to climb Mount Kilimanjaro in Africa, Mount Everest in Asia, Mount McKinley in North America, Mount Aconcagua in South America, and Mount Puncak Jaya in Oceania.

Along the way, Magar faced numerous challenges. He was denied permission to climb Everest because of his disability, only gaining access after a legal challenge. Now he wants to raise awareness of disabilities and donate the money he raised from the seven summits challenge to nonprofits that help veterans. "If you have a dream and dedicate yourself and never give up, you can achieve anything," he said.

IT'S AN AMAZING WEEK FOR...

CELEBRATING BUTTER

About 361 million pounds of butter are produced in Wisconsin every year, and now residents can get a butter-yellow license plate to honor their dairy industry. The plate features the state's nickname, "America's Dairyland."

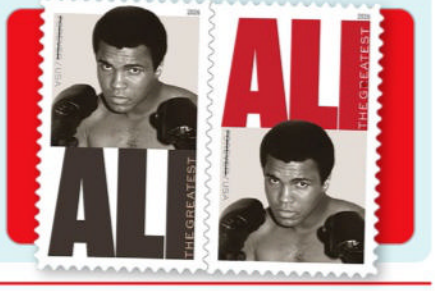
GORILLA TWINS

Wildlife experts reported the "rare and remarkable" birth of twin mountain gorillas in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Born to 22-year-old Mafuko, the male babies provide hope for the endangered species. There are about 1,075 mountain gorillas left in the wild.

The twins and their mother

HONORING AN ICON

Legendary boxer, civil rights activist, and humanitarian Muhammad Ali is being honored with a new US postal stamp. A three-time heavyweight champion and Olympic gold medalist known as "the Greatest," Ali died in 2016. "Every time [people] look at that stamp, they will remember him," said his wife, Lonnie.



ON THE COVER: GETTY IMAGES (3); NETFLIX; ON THIS PAGE: SWNS; GETTY IMAGES; WISCONSIN DOT; VIRUNGA NATIONAL PARK; USPS; ON LEFT PAGE: GETTY IMAGES (3)

The 2026 food pyramid illustrates the new dietary guidelines.

HEALTH MILESTONE
In 1953, President Dwight D. Eisenhower established the department that would become today's Health and Human Services agency.

The first food pyramid

The first US food pyramid, released in 1992, was based on one from Sweden. The bottom level showed grains; the middle level featured produce; the next level included eggs, dairy, meat, and fish; and the top consisted of fats and oils. The government recommended eating more foods from the bottom than the top.

Updated nutrition guidelines released

New dietary guidelines have been announced by the US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). They are a significant departure from previous recommendations.

What are dietary guidelines?

Since 1980, the US government has released guidelines to inform Americans about the ideal foods to eat for good health. The guidelines, which are updated every five years, influence the meals served at schools, hospitals, and military bases. A food pyramid was introduced in 1992 to visually illustrate the guidelines, and people were advised to eat more of the foods from the bottom than the top (see box above). In 2011, the US changed the pyramid to an image of a plate to illustrate a healthy diet.

What's in the new guidelines?

The new guidelines are visually displayed as an inverted pyramid (widest part at the top) with a greater emphasis on consuming protein and full-fat dairy products. Beef, turkey, cheese, and whole milk are shown at the top. An equal emphasis is placed on fruits and vegetables, with those foods also displayed at the top. Whole grains are located at the narrowest part of the pyramid, but the guidelines don't recommend eating less of them. Rather, an emphasis is placed on avoiding sugar and ultra-processed foods, such as chips and cookies.

How did people react?

Robert F. Kennedy Jr., head of the HHS, called the updated guidelines "the most significant reset of federal nutrition policy in history." While health experts said they are glad the guidelines continue to make fruits and vegetables a priority and support eating fewer processed foods, many of them disagree that people need more protein, particularly from red meat. Studies have shown that consuming red meat, which tends to be higher in sodium and unhealthy fats, can increase a person's risk of heart disease and other conditions.

What will happen next?

The government will distribute the guidelines to agencies that work on nationwide food programs. US states will review the guidelines to determine whether they want to incorporate the changes into their own programs.

WORD OF THE WEEK

CROISSANT

This flaky pastry's name has ancient roots. When the Romans looked at the sky and saw the thin curve of the waxing moon early in its cycle, they named it the *luna crescens*, meaning "growing moon." *Crescens* became "crescent" in English and "croissant" in French, referring to the shape of the moon and later the pastry.

THE WEEK IN HISTORY

January 18, 1993
All 50 states celebrate MLK Day

On January 18, 1993, Martin Luther King Jr. Day was celebrated in all 50 states for the first time. In 1983, President Ronald Reagan (1981–1989) had signed a bill into law designating the third Monday in January as a federal holiday honoring King. Most states also made the day a holiday, but it wasn't until Arizona and New Hampshire joined in 1993 that all 50 states participated.

Martin Luther King Jr.

Shasta Lake in California

California breaks long dry spell

For the first time in 25 years, California has no regions considered "abnormally dry" or experiencing drought (long periods without rain), according to the US Drought Monitor, a weekly map produced by federal agencies. Due to recent heavy rains, the state's reservoirs have significantly more water in them. Officials welcomed the news because it lowers the risk of wildfires, provides relief for farmers, and reduces the need for water restrictions.

The newspaper's headquarters

Historic newspaper shuts down

The *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, one of the nation's oldest newspapers, announced it will publish its final edition on May 3. After its founding in 1786, one of its first public services was to print the nation's newly adopted Constitution (highest law in the US) in 1787. The family that owns that paper said it had lost more than $350 million operating the newspaper in recent years.

Barbie doll with autism introduced

Mattel has revealed its first Barbie with autism, a condition that affects about 1 in 31 children in the US. The toy company said it worked with autism advocates to create a doll that reflected some of the ways autistic people may experience the world. Among other features, each doll comes with a fidget spinner and headphones, which can provide a sense of calm. "This doll invites more children to see themselves represented in Barbie," Mattel said.

The new doll

KPop Demon Hunters

WOW! *KPop Demon Hunters* is the most watched original film in Netflix history. It has been streamed more than 500 million times worldwide.

Golden Globe Awards presented

The best films, TV shows, and other forms of entertainment from 2025 were honored on January 11 at the 83rd Golden Globe Awards. The televised ceremony was held at the Beverly Hilton Hotel in Los Angeles, California, and was hosted by comedian Nikki Glaser. The winners are selected by a group of 300 international entertainment journalists based in the US.

One of the night's biggest winners was the animated musical *KPop Demon Hunters*, which received awards for best animated motion picture and best original song (for "Golden"). The film's co-director, Maggie Kang, made history as the first Asian woman to win a Golden Globe for best animated film. Accepting the award, she thanked "everyone who believed that a movie so deeply rooted in Korean culture could resonate with a global audience." The wins followed the film's awards for best animated feature and best song at the Critics' Choice Awards on January 4.

Maggie Kang, co-director of *KPop Demon Hunters*

Among other big moments during the ceremony, Owen Cooper, age 16, became the youngest person to win best supporting actor in a TV series. He won for his role as a troubled teen in *Adolescence* (rated TV-MA). At age 30, Timothée Chalamet became the youngest winner in the best actor in a musical or comedy category. He portrayed a champion ping-pong player in the film *Marty Supreme* (rated R).

An award for best podcast was given for the first time. Actress and comedian Amy Poehler, who voices Joy in the *Inside Out* films, won for *Good Hang with Amy Poehler*, in which she talks with celebrities about their lives. *The Pitt*, a TV show about a hospital emergency department (rated TV-MA), won best drama series, and its star Noah Wyle won best actor. The show's creator, R. Scott Gemmill, thanked health-care workers and first responders in his acceptance speech, calling them "the real heroes who inspire us."

THE WEEK'S SILLIEST HEADLINE

"Escaped monkey causes chaos inside Tennessee music store" *UPI*

NETFLIX: GETTY IMAGES (4); MATTEL INC.; ON LEFT PAGE: U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE/U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES; USDA; GETTY IMAGES (2)

Around the world

David Bowie (above) and his former home

London, United Kingdom
Rock star's home to open to the public

The childhood home of British music legend David Bowie (1947–2016) is set to open to the public in 2027. Bowie lived there from ages 8 to 20. The Heritage of London Trust bought it and plans to restore its original 1960s decor, along with books and other items owned by the singer. Visitors can see Bowie's bedroom, where he spent time reading and listening to music. Creative workshops for children will also take place at the home.

An illegal mine

Guyana
Miners accused of smuggling gold

Authorities in Guyana have accused 107 Brazilian miners of breaking local laws. They say the miners, who work in the Amazon rainforest, illegally sent large amounts of raw gold back to Brazil instead of declaring it to the government and selling it to authorized buyers. Gold is a big business for Guyana. Officials suspended the miners' work licenses and are threatening to deport them (force them to leave the country).

Firefighters at work

Patagonia, Argentina
Forest fires cause destruction

Wildfires have spread across more than 37,000 acres in the Patagonia region of southern Argentina. The fires have destroyed forests and buildings and caused at least 3,000 people to flee their homes. Firefighters are battling the blazes with the help of helicopters and air tankers (planes that carry water). Rainfall on January 11 provided additional relief.

Sicily, Italy
Eruptions affect volcano tours

Tour guides at the Mount Etna volcano went on strike (refusal to work as a form of protest) after officials introduced new rules following recent eruptions. The rules restrict tours to certain times and limit how close visitors can be to the lava flows. Guides say the rules are too strict because the lava is slow-moving and can be viewed safely.

Etna erupting

Lagos, Nigeria
Musicians honored

Nigerian artists dominated the top honors at the ninth All Africa Music Awards (AFRIMA), which took place on January 7–11. Burna Boy won Album of the Year and shared Best African Collaboration with singer-songwriter Shallipopi, who also won Song of the Year. Rema took home three prizes, including Artist of the Year, and Yemi Alade won Best Soundtrack for her song "You Are," from the animated children's TV series *Iyanu: The Age of Wonders*.

Burna Boy

GETTY IMAGES (5); ALAMY (4); SHUTTERSTOCK

Lapland, Finland
Tourists stranded

Extreme cold forced an airport in Lapland to halt flights and left thousands of tourists stranded. Temperatures dropped below -34º F, causing equipment to freeze and making it hard to remove ice from planes. Lapland, which some say is the home of Santa Claus, is a popular destination for tourists hoping to see the Northern Lights.

Tokyo, Japan
Taking an icy dip

About 100 worshippers took a plunge in icy water as part of a 71-year-old tradition called Kanchu Misogi. Wearing white, people prayed and jogged around the Teppozu Inari Shrine before entering a pool of cold water filled with chunks of ice. Flute and percussion music played as the devotees poured the water over their bodies with buckets. In Japan's Shinto religion, this ritual is believed to purify the soul and bring good health.

Khartoum, Sudan
Government moves back to capital

Sudan's government announced that it has returned to the capital city of Khartoum for the first time in nearly three years. When a civil war (conflict between groups within a country) started in April 2023, a group called the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) took over Khartoum. Since then, the government had been operating from the eastern city of Port Sudan. The army re-captured Khartoum last year, forcing out the RSF.

Sydney, Australia
Ramp improves access for cyclists

On January 6, the first cyclists used a new ramp to access the Sydney Harbor Bridge bike path. The ramp cost about $26 million to build and was decorated by local artists. It replaces a 55-step staircase, enabling cyclists to travel across the bridge from North Sydney to the city's Central Business District without having to carry their bikes up or down stairs.

Saudi Arabia
Race in the desert

When *The Week Junior* went to press, the world's biggest motorsports event was underway. At the Dakar Rally, held from January 3–17, competitors race cars, trucks, motorcycles, and off-road vehicles across nearly 5,000 miles of sand dunes, mountains, and desert. The race takes place in 13 stages on different courses. After stage 10, Nasser Al-Attiyah of Qatar was leading the car category as the racers continued toward the finish in Yanbu.

Does it matter if music is made by AI?

Some people say we deserve to know if our favorite tunes are computer-generated.

What you need to know

- **Artificial intelligence (AI) is a computer system that can learn from experience, like humans do.**
- **AI music is created when a computer system analyzes existing songs and uses that data to create new ones.**
- **There are currently no clear laws in the US about the creation of AI music or how it is presented.**
- **Music streaming services such as Spotify are not required to let listeners know that music on their platform is AI-generated.**

DID YOU KNOW?
About 20,000 AI-generated tracks are uploaded to the Deezer streaming service every day.

A band called the Velvet Sundown broke through in 2025, with three albums and more than a million monthly listeners on Spotify. Photographs of the four band members showed them performing, driving, and eating together. But fans noticed there was very little about them online and thought that was odd. Soon it was revealed that Velvet Sundown's music was made entirely by AI. Fans were in for an even greater shock when they learned that the band members didn't exist—they were AI-generated too. Many people were outraged, but others said it didn't matter because they still liked the music. What do you think? Does it matter if music is made by AI?

Yes—people should know up front

Music is so much more than just lyrics and a melody—it's an expression of human emotions and experiences and often carries powerful messages. Computer-generated music can't possibly have the same depth. And even AI music has to come from somewhere. Human artists like Dua Lipa and Elton John have raised concerns that their music is being used to train AI without their permission. That's not fair. Besides, AI is evolving so quickly that it will soon be even harder to tell what's human-made and what's not. People have a right to know they're listening to AI-generated tracks, so they should be labeled clearly.

No—the experience is what matters

As long as people like the way a song sounds and makes them feel, do they really need to know how it was created? It's the outcome—and how they experience it—that matters. If people can't tell that music was made using AI, then surely it's just as good as the real thing. Besides, AI could be a real boost to musicians. Not everyone has access to a recording studio or expensive equipment, and they can use AI to supplement their own efforts. AI-generated music is simply the result of progress. Artists have been using technology to make tracks for years. This is the next natural step.

YES Three reasons it matters if music is made by AI

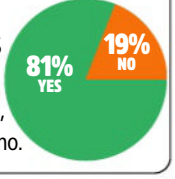
1. **Music is about human experiences and emotions. Computers can't re-create this.**
2. **AI models are trained on music that was created by human artists. It's not fair to use their work like this.**
3. **AI music should be clearly labeled on streaming platforms so listeners can choose whether or not to listen to it.**

NO Three reasons it doesn't matter if music is made by AI

1. **If people are moved by the music, it doesn't matter how it was produced.**
2. **Not everyone plays an instrument or has access to a recording studio. AI lets more people make their own music.**
3. **Using new technology to make music isn't new. Artists have been doing it for years, and this is natural progress.**

LAST WEEK'S POLL

Last week, we asked if the US minimum wage should be raised. A large majority of you support a pay increase for US workers: 81% of you said yes, and 19% said no.



What do you think?

Now that you've read a bit more about this issue, visit kids.theweekjunior.com/polls so you can vote in our debate. Vote YES if you think it matters if music was made by AI or NO if you don't. We'll publish the results next week.

The goal of the big debate is to present two sides of an issue fairly in order to stimulate discussion and allow our readers to make up their minds. The views on this page do not reflect those of *The Week Junior*, and the page is not funded by third parties.

GETTY IMAGES

Chasing cheetahs

Bertie Gregory documents the world's fastest land animals in a new special.

British wildlife filmmaker, photographer, and National Geographic Explorer Bertie Gregory is known for capturing rare animal behaviors in extreme environments. His new documentary special, *Cheetahs Up Close*, is now streaming on Disney+. It spotlights the challenging and breathtaking lives of cheetahs in the Serengeti.

A scene from *Cheetahs Up Close*

Growing up in Reading, England, Gregory loved nature and photography. He graduated with a zoology degree from the University of Bristol in 2014 and flew the next day to South Africa to assist National Geographic Explorer Steve Winter on a project filming leopards.

Gregory has since traveled the world, filming pumas in Patagonia and emperor penguins in Antarctica. He has produced and hosted many Nat Geo and Disney+ series, including *Animals Up Close with Bertie Gregory* (2023) and *Sharks Up Close* (2025).

Cheetahs were a natural next choice because technology now makes it possible to match their speed, Gregory told *The Week Junior*. His team used drones and cameras mounted on vehicles to follow the animal as they ran up to 70 miles per hour. Gregory hopes the special shows viewers how to observe wildlife responsibly. "There's a right way and a wrong way to follow cheetahs," he said.

One of Gregory's favorite parts of wildlife filmmaking is showcasing the animals and the local guides he works alongside to understand animal behavior. "You feel like you're in this little club that you weren't in before," he said.

AWARD WINNER

In 2022, Bertie Gregory became the youngest cinematographer to win a BAFTA (top UK TV and film prize) for his work on Sir David Attenborough's *Seven Worlds, One Planet*.

Bertie Gregory

Funding field trips

Quinta Brunson, creator and star of *Abbott Elementary*, has launched a fund to help kids in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, go on school field trips. Brunson grew up in the city, where her show is set, and worked with the school board to create the Quinta Brunson Field Trip Fund. It will pay for trips to museums and historic landmarks for more than 117,000 students from underserved communities. Brunson said field trips were important to her as a child because they "let me know the world is bigger—even in my own city."

Quinta Brunson

Lily Zhang

A star in table tennis

Lily Zhang has made history by becoming the first woman to be ranked No. 1 on the official power rankings of Major League Table Tennis (MLTT), a US professional league that launched in 2023. Zhang, who started playing at age 7, is a four-time Olympian with multiple national championships. She plays for the Bay Area Blasters in the MLTT and earned a rating of 787.4 after winning all three matches at a recent tournament. Zhang called her historic win an honor. "I just hope that a young girl is watching and she believes that she can join the league and do the same thing," she said.

OVERHEARD

"A hundred years is not enough. You want to live more, which I plan to."

Hollywood legend Dick Van Dyke, known for his starring roles in *Mary Poppins* and the 1960s sitcom *The Dick Van Dyke Show*, on reaching the age of 100

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC/JIGAR GANATRA; NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC/TOM WALKER; GETTY IMAGES (3)

AMAZING ABILITY
Some octopuses have reportedly been able to recognize individual human faces.

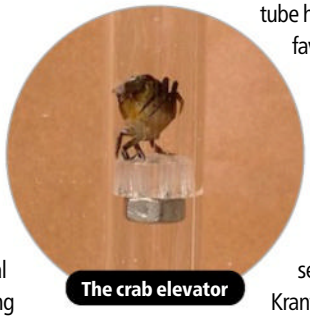
Takoyaki the octopus at his piano

Octopus learns to play the piano

Music can often be heard in the animal kingdom—for example, birds, insects, and whales have been known to "sing." But an octopus named Takoyaki has taken animal musicianship to a new level by learning how to play the piano.

Takoyaki's teacher was Swedish musician and YouTube creator Mattias Krantz, who believed that an octopus would be a good student because of their exceptional intelligence and problem-solving ability. He purchased Takoyaki, or Tako, from a Portuguese fishery and moved the eight-armed animal into a fish tank in his home.

It took about six months for Tako to learn to play. Krantz started out by placing an individual piano key in the tank and rewarding Tako with food if he touched it. He then added a lever that the octopus could grasp in order to pull the key down and make a sound.



The crab elevator

After that, Krantz made Tako his own 15-key piano. The octopus did not show any interest in the instrument until Krantz put a speaker in the water that produced vibrations each time a note was played. Then Tako began pressing random keys.

But to get him to play specific notes, Krantz had to use fishing wire to wiggle the key he wanted Tako to play. Octopuses are attracted to movement because it can signal the presence of prey.

Getting Tako to produce a melody was more difficult. Some strategies, such as using light-up keys, failed. Eventually, Krantz created a device that he called a "crab elevator." Inside a hollow tube he placed a crab, one of Tako's favorite foods. Each time Tako pressed a key the crab would move further down the tube until, after playing several notes in a row, the octopus could reach his reward. Finally, Krantz and Tako could have musical jam sessions together. In July 2025, Krantz posted a video of the octopus playing the notes to the song "Baby Shark" in the correct order (although Tako's timing was off).

Tako does not consistently play the correct sequence of keys to produce a song, and marine scientist Jenny Hofmeister told *The Washington Post* that unlike human musicians, the octopus isn't trying to follow a rhythm or tempo. Still, there's no telling what music Tako could make in the future.

Starlings can mimic R2-D2

A European starling

In an out-of-this-world study, researchers tested 10 different bird species to see how well they could mimic the iconic robot R2-D2 from the *Star Wars* movies. The species included nine types of parrots and the European starling. All of these birds are known to have the ability to imitate sounds. The starlings were the best at imitating the droid's complex beeps, boops, and whirs, likely because those birds have a unique vocal organ called a syrinx that can produce multiple tones at once. Parrots could only mimic the robot's simpler beeping sounds. This is probably because, like humans, they can produce only one tone at a time.

COOL DROOL
Dog saliva is 98% water, but it also contains proteins, minerals, and disease-fighting substances.

Canine companions can boost well-being.

Dogs may improve mental health

Surveys have shown that pets can provide their owners with companionship, relieve stress, and support social connections. Now scientists have discovered a new reason why living with a dog may be good for a teenager's emotional health.

Researchers at Azabu University in Japan studied 343 teenagers, of which 96 lived in homes with dogs. The teens who had dogs scored higher on tests of mental well-being. Dog owners also had more social support and were less likely to exhibit aggressive behavior or problems with their thinking.

To find out why, the team studied the mix of bacteria in the teens' saliva, known as a microbiome. Shaped by diet and lifestyle, a person's microbiome is believed to influence their digestion, physical health, and mood.

The team discovered that teens with dogs had higher amounts of certain bacteria compared to their peers. When tested in mice, these bacteria were associated with acting more empathetic and social. Scientists are unsure exactly how pet dogs may affect a person's microbiome, but they say it could be a pathway to better mental health.

Animal of the week: Monk parakeet

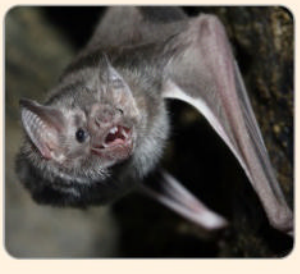
A study found that monk parakeets take it slow when making new friends. Experts observed that the birds were initially cautious toward strangers. But over time, some birds became friendly enough to stand close, touch beaks, and even share food.

- **LIFESPAN:** 15 to 20 years
- **HABITAT:** South American grasslands
- **SIZE:** About 11 inches with a 19-inch wingspan
- **DIET:** Seeds, berries, nuts, and flowers
- **FUN FACT:** Popular as pets, some have escaped and established wild populations in US cities.

Good week / Bad week

Przewalski's horses

Earth's last wild horse species is rebounding in captivity and in the wild. Two Przewalski's horses were recently born at the San Diego Zoo Safari Park in California, and several returned to the wild in Kazakhstan after more than 200 years.



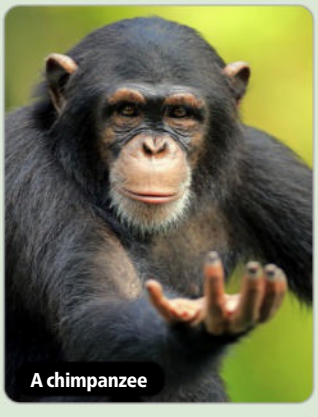
Vampire bats

New evidence suggests that more than a dozen vampire bats in Peru may have been infected with bird flu. Experts think the bats could have caught the virus by biting sick marine animals such as seagulls and sea lions.

ASK AN EXPERT: "Do primates have fingerprints like humans do?" Daisy, 12, New York

Kim Skelton
Primate care expert,
Brookfield Zoo Chicago

Yes, many primates do have fingerprints! These patterns help with gripping and climbing but are rarely used for identification. Although chimpanzees and gorillas have fingerprints, for example, researchers tell gorillas apart by their distinctive nose wrinkles—like facial fingerprints!



A chimpanzee

Do you have a question for an animal expert? Send it to *hello@theweekjunior.com*. Find out more about Brookfield Zoo Chicago at brookfieldzoo.org.

GETTY IMAGES (4); ALAMY; ON THE PAGE: MATTIAS KRANTZ (2); ALAMY

The story of a buttery

Flaky and fabulous, they're among the world's most popular pastries.

Croissants are a classic, crescent-shaped French pastry. Find out how they became a staple in bakeries, cafes, and homes around the globe.

Making croissants

What's a croissant?

A croissant is a buttery, flaky pastry made from flour, butter, water, milk, sugar, salt, and yeast. The ingredients may be simple, but making croissants is complex and time-consuming. Cold butter is first layered between sheets of dough in a process called lamination. The dough is then cut into triangles and typically rolled by hand into crescent shapes from the broad end to the pointy tip. During baking, water in the butter turns to steam, separating the layers and giving the croissant its puffy, flaky texture.

Austrian kipfels

History of croissants

The modern croissant was inspired by the kipfel (or kipferl), an Austrian crescent-shaped baked good dating to the medieval period. It was made with butter or lard and sometimes included almonds. The kipfel was not flaky or layered, however, and depending on the recipe, it resembled a cookie or a roll. In the 1830s, an Austrian man named August Zang opened a Viennese bakery in Paris, France. Parisian bakers were inspired by his kipfel recipe and adapted it to create the lighter, flakier croissants we know today. In 1853, one of the earliest known references to a French croissant appeared in a book by chemist Anselme Payen.

DID YOU KNOW?
The word "croissant" translates to "crescent" or "crescent moon" in French.

BIGGER IS BETTER
One type of croissant sold at bakeries in Paris and London measures about 18 inches long and weighs more than 3 pounds.

Croissant hybrids

Cronut

This cross between a croissant and a donut (right) was created by a French pastry chef. It's rolled in sugar and filled with cream, then glazed.

Cruffin

Originating in Australia, this hybrid pastry (right) is made by baking the ingredients of a croissant in a muffin tin, resulting in a mushroom shape. Before baking, it may be filled with sweet custard, jam, or cream.

SHUTTERSTOCK (2); GETTY IMAGES (7)

breakfast treat

Julia Child

Rising in popularity

The first modern French croissant recipe, featuring the lamination method, is often credited to a 1915 French cookbook by chef Sylvain Claudius Goy. During the 20th century, croissants became a staple of French breakfasts and joined the country's other culinary influences that were spreading around the world. In the 1920s and 1930s, croissants began appearing more widely in the US, especially in bakeries in major cities like New York. In 1963, cookbook author and TV host Julia Child demonstrated how to make croissants on her popular show, *The French Chef*, demystifying a complex pastry for home cooks. The mass production of croissants in the 1970s made them available in more places. In 1981, the food brand Sara Lee introduced frozen croissant dough, making it easier for people to bake the pastries at home.

Cube croissants

Innovative ideas

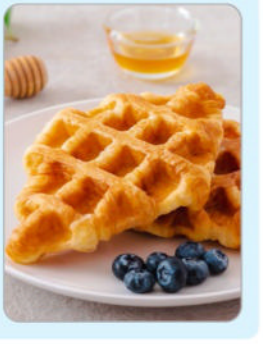
In the 2010s, chefs began experimenting with croissants, introducing two-color and rainbow varieties. There was also a wave of new hybrid croissant shapes (see box at left). Cube croissants, made from a square mold, were created in 2018. Today, there are croissants in creative flavors ranging from pumpkin pie to matcha. Bakeries also sell croissants with fillings including berry glaze, pistachio sauce, chocolate ganache, lychee, and pulled pork. A new US trend imported from South Korea is flat croissants, in which the classic pastry is pressed flat and then pan-fried.

Crookie

A viral sensation from a Parisian bakery, the crookie (right) is made by stuffing and topping a classic croissant with rich chocolate chip cookies, resulting in a pastry that is both crispy and gooey.

Croffle

The croffle (right) was first made popular in Seoul, South Korea. Croissant dough (homemade or store-bought) is pressed in a waffle iron until the result is golden and crispy.



HIGH POWERED
The brain uses 20 watts of power to function—that's enough energy to run a bright LED light bulb.

Scientists are studying how the brain develops.

The brain has five key ages

Your brain only goes into "adult mode" in your 30s, according to new research. Scientists scanned the brains of about 4,000 people—from babies under age 1 to 90-year-olds.

The researchers identified four major "turning points" when brains rewire themselves: at the ages of 9, 32, 66, and 83. This means that human brains have five distinct "eras," which help scientists understand how the brain is wired during different stages of life. The "wiring" controls how the brain sends and receives signals and affects how people experience the world, make decisions, and form memories. It is also related to mental health and developmental conditions.

Babies' brains grow fast.

From birth until age 9, children's brains grow white and gray matter. Gray matter is a type of brain tissue that processes and interprets information and is involved in memory and emotion. White matter carries signals between chunks of gray matter and helps with learning and paying attention. During this time, the many synapses (links between nerves) between young children's brain cells start decreasing. The researchers call this era "childhood."

The second era, "adolescence," lasts from age 9 until 32. During this time, the brain continues to grow more white matter, improving communication inside the brain. People get better at remembering, paying attention, and solving problems. Alexa Mousley, a student at the University of Cambridge in the UK who led the research, told *The Guardian* newspaper, "We're definitely not saying that people in their late 20s are going to be acting like teenagers, or even that their brain looks like that of a teenager's. It's really the pattern of change."

From 32 onward, the brain enters "adulthood." This is the longest era in a person's life. The brain becomes more stable, and brain regions become more separate from each other. In "early aging" (66–83 years old) and "late aging" (from 83 onward), the connections in the brain start to decrease.

"These eras provide important context for what our brains might be best at, or more vulnerable to, at different stages of our lives," said Mousley. She added that the findings could help scientists understand why some brains develop differently than others and how that might affect people.

Six fun facts about the brain

A guinea pig

1. A baby's brain doubles in size between birth and their first birthday.

2. The brain itself can't feel pain because it doesn't have any pain receptors inside it.

3. Your brain gets smaller as you get older.

4. Human brains use more energy than any other organ in the body—about a fifth of all your energy.

5. The adult human brain weighs about 2.75 pounds—that's about the same as a large guinea pig.

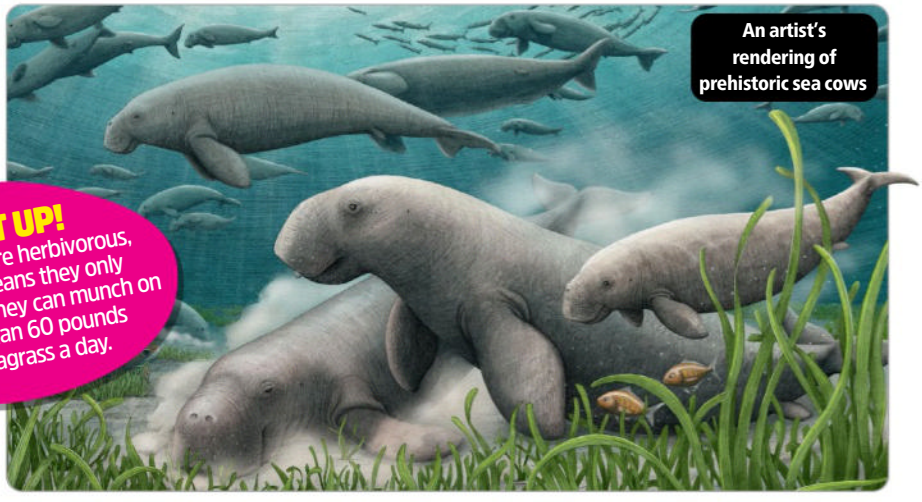
6. About three quarters of your brain is water, which means getting dehydrated affects your ability to think.

Ancient sea cows helped the planet

Scientists recently identified a species of marine mammal that lived in the Persian Gulf, a sea in the Middle East, more than 20 million years ago. The prehistoric sea cow is related to modern-day dugongs, and like today's animals, they played an important role in maintaining the health of their underwater ecosystem (group of plants and animals that affect one another).

The new species was found in an area that has the world's richest deposits of sea cow fossils. In 2023, experts studying the region found more than 300 sea cow remains from six individuals. The fossils were found less than 10 miles from a spot where large groups of dugongs gather today. When the researchers carefully analyzed the remains, they realized the bones came from a previously unknown species.

The team named the sea cow Salwasiren qatarensis. The species was smaller, with smaller tusks and snouts, than modern dugongs. But the ancient and modern animals had a similar diet, which affected their environment. Like dugongs, Salwasiren qatarensis ate sea grass. When they did, they uprooted the plants and released nutrients that were hidden beneath it. Those nutrients provided food for other creatures and also helped more sea grasses grow.



An artist's rendering of prehistoric sea cows

EAT UP!
Dugongs are herbivorous, which means they only eat plants. They can munch on more than 60 pounds of seagrass a day.

The researchers said finding out about the past is key to the future. "Dugongs are endangered, so it's important to understand their evolutionary history as well as the importance of these different areas around the world for their survival," said Christopher Marshall, an author of the study.

A bowl of kimchi

Kimchi boosts the immune system

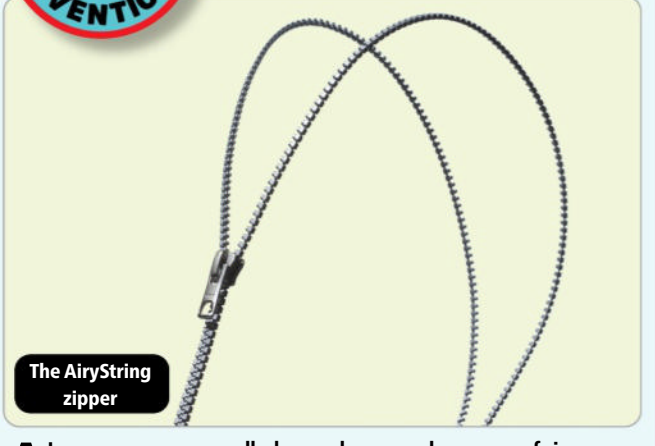
A new study revealed that eating kimchi can help people stay healthy. In the past, this traditional Korean dish of fermented vegetables, like napa cabbage, was shown to support gut health.

Scientists in South Korea studied 13 people, divided into three test groups, over 12 weeks. Two groups were given kimchi in powder form. One of the powdered kimchis was fermented naturally, while the other was fermented with the use of a starter culture (like bacteria or yeast). A third group received a placebo (a substance with no actual medicine). The participants did not know what they received.

Researchers analyzed the participants' blood and found that kimchi boosted and regulated their immune systems. The kimchi made from starter culture was slightly more effective, meaning scientists could develop kimchis with particular health properties.

AMAZING INVENTION

A zipper that will reduce waste



The AiryString zipper

A Japanese company called YKK, which is one of the world's largest producers of zippers, has created a new kind of zipper for clothing.

Traditionally, zippers have tape, which is a strip of fabric on both sides that is sewn onto clothing. The AiryString, however, has a row of zipper teeth that can be sewn directly onto clothes instead.

YKK said that the absence of tape makes the AiryString more flexible. It also generates less scrap fabric and uses less water to dye and produce, making it better for the environment.

ALEX BOERSMA; GETTY IMAGES; YKK; ON THE LEFT PAGE: GETTY IMAGES (3)

Photos of the week

White out
In Italy, an installation by Chiharu Shiota, a Japanese artist, re-creates snow falling.

Bright blooms
Colorful edible flowers fill a bowl in France.

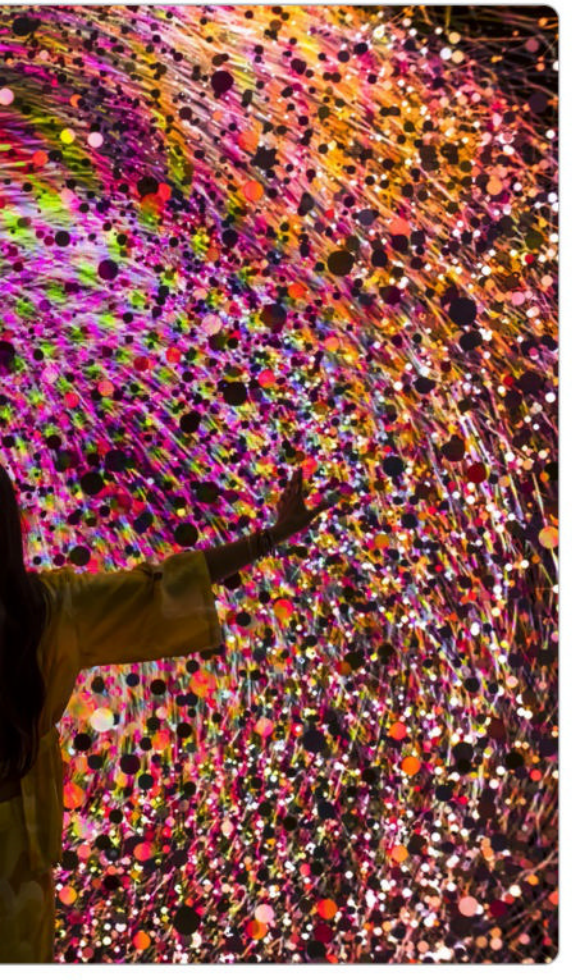
Feathered flock
Baikal teals, a type of duck, fly over a lake at sunrise in China.

Light show
A visitor interacts with an immersive digital exhibition in Florida.

GETTY IMAGES (6)

Photos of the week

Winter wonderland
New York City's Central Park is awash in white after a snowstorm.



Looking up
An ornate design decorates the ceiling of a new building in China.

STARS ON ICE
The US has won 53 Olympic medals in figure skating, dating back to 1924.

Olympic dreams

The last time a US skater won any Olympic medal in women's singles was in 2006, and the last gold was won by Sarah Hughes (above) in 2002. However, that is expected to change this year thanks to Glenn, Levito, and Liu, who are currently ranked third, fourth, and fifth in the world.

Skaters compete at US nationals

From January 7 to January 11, the US Figure Skating Championships were held in St. Louis, Missouri. It was the final competition before the Olympics in Italy next month, and the results helped determine the 16 skaters that would make Team USA. The athletes competing included reigning singles world champions Ilia Malinin and Alysa Liu, as well as ice dance world champions Madison Chock and Evan Bates.

Alysa Liu

In an exciting women's singles competition, Amber Glenn won her third consecutive national title. She dominated the short program, where she received a record-high score. Liu, a two-time US champion, also earned a record-high score in the short program, which Glenn beat. The scores in the free skate were closer, but Glenn earned her best score of the season and held on to first place. Liu finished in second, and Isabeau Levito took third. The trio celebrated together, and Glenn said the women "were on fire this competition." They are all headed to the Olympics.

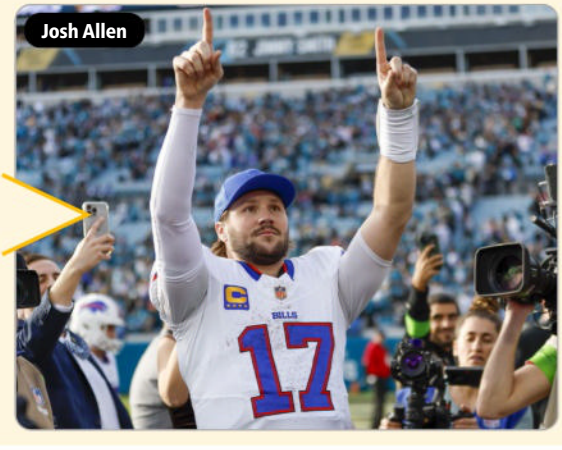
Ilia Malinin continued his dominance in men's singles and won his fourth straight US title. He is nicknamed the "Quad God" because of his mastery of quadruple jumps, but he skated conservatively at the event due to foot discomfort. Still, he finished his short program with a lead of almost 25 points, and by the end of the free skate, his combined score was 57.26 points more than second-place finisher Andrew Torgashev. Malinin will be on the Olympic team and is the gold-medal favorite. Torgashev and Maxim Naumov will join him in Italy.

In ice dance, Chock and Bates set a record by winning their seventh national championship. They will compete at the Olympics, where they will seek their first gold medal. The other US ice dance couples will be Christina Carreira and Anthony Ponomarenko, and Emilea Zingas and Vadym Kolesnik. Meanwhile, in the pairs event, Alisa Efimova and Misha Mitrofanov defended their national title comfortably. But Efimova, who is from Finland, is not yet a US citizen, so she and Mitrofanov will not join Team USA. Second-place finishers Ellie Kam and Daniel O'Shea were named to the US team along with fourth-place finishers Emily Chan and Spencer Akira.

THIS WEEK'S WINNERS...

FOOTBALL

In an NFL Wild Card playoff game on January 10, the Chicago Bears came from 18 points behind to defeat their rivals, the Green Bay Packers, 31–27. Other teams that advanced in the playoffs include the Buffalo Bills, whose quarterback Josh Allen led the team to a 27–24 win over the Jacksonville Jaguars, and the San Francisco 49ers, who beat the Philadelphia Eagles, last season's Super Bowl champions, 23–19.


Josh Allen

WOMEN'S HOCKEY

In the PWHL on January 11, the Ottawa Charge defeated the Boston Fleet, 2–1, in a shootout. It was the team's sixth-straight win and is the longest winning streak in the PWHL this season.

COLLEGE BASKETBALL

After a win on January 10, the record of the Vanderbilt University men's team grew to 16–0. The next day, the women's team reached 17–0. Vanderbilt is the only US college whose two teams are still undefeated.

Unrivaled players Lexie Hill (left) and Paige Bueckers

COURT CONTEST
The Unrivaled player with the highest free-throw percentage after five games will be awarded $50,000.

Unrivaled season underway

The second season of Unrivaled, the professional women's 3-on-3 basketball league, tipped off on January 5 at the Sephora Arena in Medley, Florida. After a successful debut season, the league has added two new clubs, Breeze BC and Hive BC, bringing the total number to eight. The defending champions are Rose BC.

Unrivaled was created to give WNBA (Women's National Basketball Association) players a way to compete in the US during the offseason. Games are played on a smaller court than WNBA games, and they follow a special format that helps create exciting fourth quarters.

There are 54 players in the league, including WNBA veterans Breanna Stewart, Alyssa Thomas, and Kelsey Plum. Before the season started, clubs filled their rosters through a draft. Teams that made last year's playoffs were allowed to protect two players, while the others could each protect one. The Breeze had the first draft pick and selected WNBA star rookie Paige Bueckers.

After the first week of games, the Rose and Mist BC were undefeated. The Breeze were in third place with a 2–1 record. One player dominating the court is Chelsea Gray of the Rose. She leads the league in scoring, three-pointers, and game-winning baskets. Plum, who plays for Phantom BC, has been another standout. On January 10, she scored 38 points, which ties the league record for single-game points. She also recorded eight rebounds and 11 assists.

Most regular-season Unrivaled games are held at the Sephora Arena, but there will be a tour stop in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, on January 30.

COACH OF THE WEEK

Coach's Name: **Danny Bastalla**

Organization: **Kenebec Kicks Run Club**

"Coach Danny always pushes us to be the best we can be at running. He teaches us how to pace ourselves, and he shows us what can come out of hard work and dedication. He is always excited to run and makes us excited too! He has a personal bond with every girl in the club. He is also super nice and always makes me laugh. He is why I love to run! I'm not in his group anymore, but he'll always be my favorite coach." Aoibhinn, 10, New York

To nominate a Coach of the Week, send your coach's name, photo, sport, and team to *hello@theweekjunior.com.* Include your name, age, state, and a few reasons why your coach is great.

SPOTLIGHT ON...

These US athletes have qualified or are hoping to qualify for the upcoming Winter Olympics or Paralympics in Italy. Here are some thoughts they shared with The Week Junior *about their lives and their sports.*

Jaelin Kauf AGE: 29
SPORT: FREESTYLE SKIING

"Both my parents were professional mogul skiers. My brother, who is a year older, fell in love with the sport and roped me in because I wanted to do what he did. I am really excited that dual moguls is coming to the Olympics so we'll have two medal events this time."

Jake Adicoff AGE: 30
SPORT: PARA NORDIC SKIING

"Pressure is tricky. I always remind myself that nervousness and excitement are pretty similar emotions. I try to hit myself with this line: 'You're not nervous, you're excited.' That can usually reframe a day for me."

Breezy Johnson AGE: 29
SPORT: ALPINE SKIING

"When you're skiing, you're using 100% of your mind and your body. We're going 80 miles an hour doing physics problems to figure out, Do I need to adjust my line? Should I be tucking or not?"

Brittany Bowe AGE: 37
SPORT: SPEEDSKATING

"My favorite thing about speed skating is the purity of the sport, especially in time trialing, where the fastest person wins—no ifs, ands, or buts about it."

Alex Ferreira AGE: 31
SPORT: FREESTYLE SKIING

"I'm most looking forward to the opportunity to win a gold medal. I've been working so hard, and it's the first thing I think about when I wake up and the last thing I think about when I go to sleep. I'm grateful to have the opportunity to go for my dreams."

GETTY IMAGES (7); ON LEFT PAGE: GETTY IMAGES (7)

STYLISH SUCCESS
In 2016, Paul Tazewell won an Emmy Award for the costumes in the TV musical special *The Wiz: Live.*

Anita in *West Side Story* (left) and a drawing of her dress (above)

Famous costumes on display

A new exhibition has looks from *Hamilton*, the *Wicked* film, and other big productions.

One of the most well-known costume designers working today is Paul Tazewell. Last year, he received the Academy Award for best costume design for *Wicked* and made history as the first Black man to win that prize. A few months later, he won a Tony for the costumes in the Broadway musical *Death Becomes Her*. He has also won a Tony for the Broadway show *Hamilton* and been nominated for many other projects. Now the Griffin Museum of Science and Industry in Chicago, Illinois, is hosting the first-ever exhibition dedicated to Tazewell's career. *Crafting Character: The Costumes of Paul Tazewell* opens January 19.

Paul Tazewell

Tazewell was raised in Akron, Ohio, and his mother was an artist and educator who taught him to sew. He went to college to study acting but shifted to costume design. Over the years, he has created costumes for Broadway, film, television, dance, and operas.

The exhibition is filled with costumes as well as sketches and behind-the-scenes photos. There are also videos of Tazewell explaining how he comes up with his designs and the teamwork it takes to bring the costumes to life. Dr. Voula Saridakis, the exhibition's curator (organizer), told *The Week Junior* a goal of the show is to help people "learn more about his work in general and who he is as a person, in his own words and in his own vision."

The first part of the exhibition is about Tazewell's childhood and the foundation of his creativity. It includes puppets and marionettes that he made growing up, along with puppets his mother made for him and his brothers.

Among the *Wicked* items on display are Glinda's bubble dress from her first arrival on screen, plus Elphaba's dress from her trip to Emerald City and her cape from the "Defying Gravity" scene. Another memorable design in the show is a yellow dress with a red underskirt worn by the character Anita in the 2021 movie musical *West Side Story*. Broadway fans can see the Schuyler Sisters' gowns from *Hamilton*, and there are even outfits Tazewell designed for singer-actress Janelle Monáe to wear to New York City's glamorous Met Gala.

Saridakis said the exhibition is designed to showcase more than just finished work. "It really explores this idea of how imagination becomes reality," she said. She hopes visitors leave inspired, and that they remember that "whatever your dreams are, and whatever you put your mind to, you can achieve that."

A memorable *Hamilton* costume

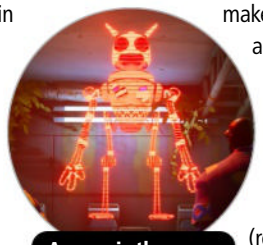
One of the costumes on display in *Crafting Character* is King George III's look from *Hamilton* (above). Dr. Voula Saradakis called the costume "a sight to behold" and added, "The colors on the cape are gorgeous. The level of detail...is amazing." Tazewell based his costume for the character, a real British monarch who ruled during the time of the American Revolution (1775–1783), on an outfit the king wore in a portrait. For *Hamilton*'s other costumes, Tazewell studied paintings and clothing from the 18th century and also drew inspiration from contemporary fashion.

ANCIENT ARTWORK
The earliest known drawing is more than 70,000 years old and was discovered in South Africa.

Relooted

Video game rooted in history

Last year, the Netherlands returned more than 100 priceless artifacts known as Benin Bronzes that had been stolen by members of the British army in Nigeria in 1897. However, more Benin Bronzes, along with many thousands of other African artifacts that were obtained forcefully or improperly, still remain in museums in Europe and elsewhere. The situation inspired Relooted, an upcoming sidescrolling action puzzle video game. An official release date has not been announced yet, but people who have played the game have given it positive reviews. A free demo is available on Steam.


A scene in the game

Relooted was created by Nyamakop, a video game studio in South Africa. The action is set in the 21st century of a futuristic African world. You play as a parkour expert who is a member of a crew of citizens from different places in Africa. The group plans museum heists to take back artifacts, and includes scientists, programmers, and a locksmith. They are led by an art historian.

There are 70 items to take, and they are all copies of pieces in real-world museums. Researchers spent about two years doing work to make sure the artifacts are represented accurately. One reason for doing that was so people from Africa who can't see the pieces in museums can at least know what they look like.

Many African governments have asked museums to repatriate (return) the artifacts, but laws and slow processes make it difficult. Ben Myres, CEO and creative director of Nyamakop, told CNN that Relooted is not meant to encourage people to steal things back. Instead, he said, the developers hope the game reflects "the general frustration around repatriation."

READER RECOMMENDS

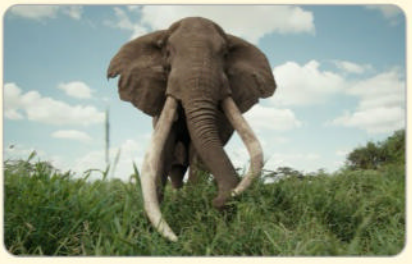
A Shaun the Sheep Movie: Farmageddon

Rated G (Netflix or rent on other platforms)

"This is the second *Shaun the Sheep* film and it is based on a TV series. In it, Shaun discovers a young alien, Lu-La, on his farm, and the other sheep help him hide her from the farmer and his dog. After Shaun and Lu-La go on a tractor ride, the farmer discovers a mysterious crop circle and decides to turn the farm into an amusement park. Meanwhile, Shaun and Lu-La try to find her parents while avoiding government agents. The film is full of silly hijinks and is unique because it has no dialogue." Conall, 10, Wisconsin

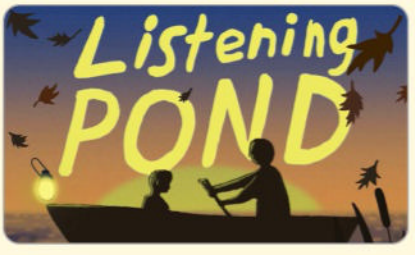
Do you have a film or TV show to recommend to other kids? Send your review to *hello@theweekjunior.com*.

3 MORE PICKS TO ENJOY THIS WEEK



WATCH: TUSKER: BROTHERHOOD OF ELEPHANTS

On January 3, a famous African elephant named Craig died at age of 54 in Kenya's Amboseli National Park. He is one of the three stars of this documentary special that follows male elephants at different life stages. It also reveals how they form friendships and navigate droughts. (PBS)



TUNE IN: LISTENING POND

Each episode of this award-winning podcast for kids and families tells a different story and features original music and narration. Among the tales are ones about a circus monkey who eats everything, rival doughnut makers, and a boy investigating a mysterious sight from his apartment window. (Major podcast platforms)

WATCH: BEAST GAMES

YouTube star MrBeast hosts this competition series, which is back for a second season and has the theme "Strong vs. Smart." In it, 100 athletic competitors and 100 brainy ones face off in challenges and vie for a $5 million prize. They will form alliances, face twists, and take part in a crossover with the TV show *Survivor*. (Prime Video)

NYAMAKOP (2); STUDIOCANAL; COURTESY OF THE WNET GROUP; LISTENING POND; AMAZON MGM STUDIOS; ON LEFT PAGE: 20TH CENTURY STUDIOS, INC. (2); GETTY IMAGES; JOAN MARCUS

THIS WEEK'S BOOK

The Claiming

By Jasmine Warga

In the spine-tingling second installment of *The Last Resort* series, seventh-graders Teddy, Lila, and her little brother Caleb once again find themselves menaced by a ghost at a haunted Victorian inn.

Nearly 200 years ago, the vengeful Fire Maiden set the circus where she worked ablaze. The kids thought they had banished her. But in class one day, Lila starts flickering in and out of existence and the friends realize their troubles have just begun. Teddy turns to the mysterious Rosteen, an online acquaintance from the Phantom Hunters forum, to find a solution to Lila's predicament and stop the Fire Maiden's schemes, which now affect the descendants of her victims.

Along the way, they uncover the shocking role the Fire Maiden played in one of history's greatest disasters, confront the hidden guilt that haunts Teddy, and learn the twisted truth Rosteen is hiding. The author expertly balances the horror elements while lightening the mood with details like Lila's obsession with macaroni and cheese. You have the option to scan QR codes on pages throughout the book to unlock interactive elements, such as hearing the ghosts talk to help readers solve the mystery. *Ages 8–12*

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR YOUR BOOK CLUB

How does Lila and Teddy's relationship change throughout the story?

Do you think Rosteen's actions in the book make him a hero or a villain? Explain your answer.

Which of the many twists and turns in the story took you most by surprise?

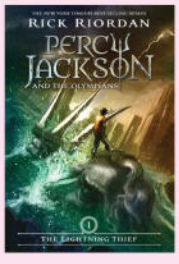
How do you think the storyline set up future books in the series?

If you read the first book in *The Last Resort* series, do you think this one is more or less scary?

Which character would you most want to have as a friend? Why?

Find your next great read

If you liked…



The Lightning Thief

By Rick Riordan

In the first book of the *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* series, 12-year-old Percy learns his true father is a Greek god. Yearning to be a hero, Percy searches for the entrance to the Underworld and tries to stop a war.

You might like…

The Island of Forgotten Gods

By Victor Piñeiro

When Nico travels to Puerto Rico on summer vacation to visit his grandmother, he encounters a mysterious winged creature. Like Percy, Nico gets pulled into a world of mythology and strives to uncover family secrets.

Guess the book this quote comes from

"I don't know what is going to happen next year, no one does. But that's OK. I can handle it, I decide. It's just a harder gear, and I am ready."

Hint: It's from the first installment in a three-book series.

Answer: *Merci Suárez Changes Gears* by Meg Medina. In this award-winning novel, Merci is a sixth-grader who faces challenges at school and at home that she's determined to overcome.

THIS WEEK'S AUTHOR

Jasmine Warga

Jasmine Warga is a best-selling author of middle-grade novels, including *A Rover's Story* and *The Shape of Thunder*. She won a Newbery Honor for her book *Other Words for Home*, a novel in verse about a 12-year-old Syrian refugee and her mother, who move to the US.

What inspired *The Claiming*?

Each book in *The Last Resort* series is written by a different author. My friend Erin Entrada Kelly wrote the first book, and in collaborating with her, we decided that Teddy would be a great point-of-view character for the second book. The new book is inspired by Teddy's love of ghosts. He has discovered the ghosts are real, and he is going to have to be brave and step up to the challenge.

Are you and Teddy similar?

Middle school was super hard for me. Teddy and I have some things in common—his father is an immigrant and his mother isn't. He feels suspended between two cultures, which I also felt as a child. This leads to the question, "Where do I belong?" He wants to fit in. He wants to be a good friend.

What was challenging about writing an interactive book?

With my other books, I'm in the driver's seat. For this, I was more of a team player. I'd get notes from the book's digital team saying this scene needs to take place in this room. And that's a limitation. Sometimes limitations are hard. But limitations can also grow creativity.

What's a book that influenced you?

My favorite book ever is probably still *Ella Enchanted* by Gail Carson Levine.

Can you share a surprising fact about yourself?

I have a double-jointed thumb. It's kind of gross. I can pop my thumb out of its socket.

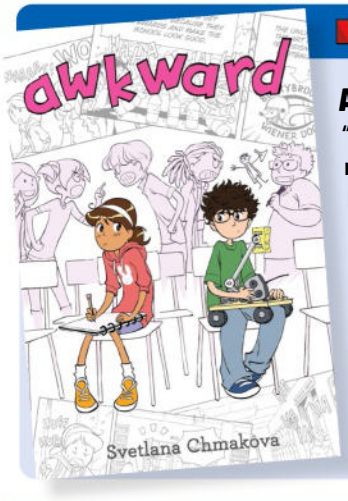
Do you have a biggest fear?

I'm really afraid of spiders.

If you could meet a ghost of a famous person, who would it be?

I would choose to talk with Maurice Sendak, author of *Where the Wild Things Are*, about being a creator and where he got his ideas.

Reader recommends



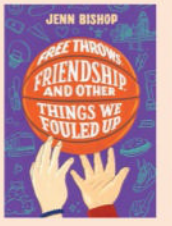
Awkward *By Svetlana Chmakova*

"A girl named Penelope has rules about school. Rule number one is don't get noticed by mean kids. However, she breaks her cardinal rule when she accidentally falls on a boy named Jaime, who helps pick up her belongings. Mean kids laugh and begin to call Penelope 'nerder girlfriend,' so she pushes Jaime and runs away. Weeks later, she really wants to say sorry, but it's too hard. Penelope has a lot going on. Will she ever say sorry to Jaime?" Maati, 10, Ohio

Do you have a book to recommend? We want to hear about it! With an adult's help, please send your review to *hello@theweekjunior.com*.

3 books with stories told in flashbacks

These engaging titles take you back and forth between past and present.



Free Throws, Friendship, and Other Things We Fouled Up
By Jenn Bishop

Two eighth-grade friends discover their dads used to be middle-school besties and basketball teammates. But they had a big falling out, and neither dad will say what happened. The girls talk to family and track down their dads' old coach to investigate. The emotional story alternates between then and now. *Ages 10+*

Odder
By Katherine Applegate, illustrated by Charles Santoso

After almost being killed by a shark, a sea otter named Odder recovers at a marine rescue center. The novel in verse flashes back to Odder's first stay at the center when she was separated from her mom during a fierce storm and later washed up on the beach. The story is loosely based on the experiences of sea otters at the Monterey Bay Aquarium in California. *Ages 8–12*

White Bird: A Wonder Story
By R.J. Palacio

At the start of this graphic novel, Julian—a main character in the blockbuster book *Wonder*—asks his Jewish grandmother about what her life was like growing up. Julian's grandmother shares her experiences having her rights taken away during the Holocaust (1933–1945). She survived thanks to kind friends and family, which makes Julian think about how he's treated classmates. *Ages 10+*

Find out more about *The Week Junior* Book Club and check out our previous titles at kids.theweekjunior.com/bookclub.

BOOKS: COURTESY OF PUBLISHERS; AUTHOR: COURTESY OF JASMINE WARGA; GETTY IMAGES

Enjoy wildlife in winter

Head outside to explore how animals adapt to the chilly season.

Winter is a perfect time to go outdoors to spot wildlife and see how they survive the chilly season. Bundle up in warm layers, and have an adult join you on your adventure.

Go birding

Birding is the act of appreciating and observing birds, and you can try it in your neighborhood or local park. Leafless tree branches in winter make it easy to spot birds that don't migrate to warmer regions. You might see a red cardinal fluffing its feathers, a mechanism that keeps it warm. You may also find raptors and their large stick nests among tree branches or forks. Owls may perch in treetops at dusk at the edge of an open field, where they can swoop down on small rodents for a quick meal. Visit open-water habitats, like a lake, pond, or river, where you may see waterfowl like ducks, geese, or pelicans huddling in groups to stay warm.

Explore animal tracks

Identifying animal tracks is easier in winter when there is fresh snow or mud on the ground. Deer leave a trail of cloven (two-part) hoof prints that resemble an upside-down heart shape. Canines like foxes, coyotes, and dogs often leave claw marks (a total of four per print), while raccoons leave their handprints. The tracks of rabbits are some of the easiest to identify in the snow. They leave four prints with each hop, forming a Y shape with two big hind prints and two small front prints.

Spot deer tracks in the snow.

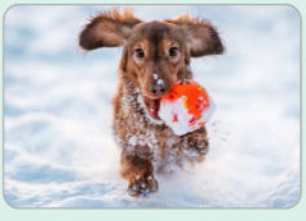
Give them shelter

You can help create homes for small mammals, birds, and insects in winter. Fill outdoor pots with straw, moss, and leaves and tuck them in the corners of a garden for creatures to seek shelter. Instead of clearing away the last of your autumn leaves, rake them into a pile. It makes the perfect hiding spot for hibernating toads or pollinators like ladybugs and butterflies.

Visit a nature center

Nature centers can teach you how local wildlife adapts to surroundings seasonally. For example, you might learn how a wood frog can freeze completely solid in the winter before thawing in the spring. During guided "night" walks on flat trails on late afternoons, you might hear the sounds of foxes, bats, frogs, and owls.

Dog tips for the cold



Take these steps to keep your pet warm and safe in snow and ice.

Protect paws Before a walk, you can put booties on your dog's paws or apply paw balm to shield them from chemical salts used to de-ice walkways.

Bundle up Talk to a parent about whether your pup needs a sweater. It can keep your pup more comfortable, especially if you have a small dog or one with a belly that is close to the ground.

Keep them occupied Your dog may be spending more time indoors in winter. You can help your pet stay active, such as with a game of hide-and-seek, or playing fetch with a soft toy.

BIG BITES
The world's largest flour taco was made in Mexico in 2003 and measured more than 36 feet long.

WARNING!
Ask an adult's permission before using the stove or oven.

Make cheesy rice and bean skillet tacos

Ingredients

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 onion, chopped
- 1 bell pepper, chopped
- 2 cups long grain white rice, rinsed
- 15-ounce can black beans, drained and rinsed
- 15-ounce can pinto beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 cup store-bought salsa
- 3½ cups vegetable stock
- 2 cups shredded Mexican cheese blend
- Corn tortillas, warmed according to package instructions, for serving
- Taco toppings (like sliced avocado, sour cream, and green onion), for serving

Instructions

1. In a large Dutch oven or a lidded, oven-safe skillet, heat the olive oil over medium-high. Add the onion and bell pepper and cook, stirring often, until they start to soften, about 5 minutes.
2. Stir in the rice, beans, salsa, and vegetable stock. Bring the mixture to a boil, stirring occasionally, then reduce the heat to a gentle simmer. Cover the pan and allow mixture to cook until the rice is tender and the liquid is absorbed, about 25 minutes.
3. Meanwhile, preheat the broiler. When the rice is ready, sprinkle the cheese over the top. With an adult's help, place the Dutch oven or the skillet, uncovered, under the broiler to melt, which should take about 1 to 2 minutes.
4. Serve with warm tortillas and your favorite taco toppings. Makes 8 servings.

LIFE HACK BUILD A STRONG AND STURDY SNOWMAN

The key to a well-built snowman starts with the snow, according to scientists. The perfect powder is moist to wet. Snow that's dry won't stick, and snow that's slushy won't hold a shape. Choose a spot on flat, level ground and in the shade, which will help your snowman stay cold and last longer. Roll three firm balls: a large one for the snowman's base, a medium ball for its middle, and a smaller ball for its head. Flatten the tops of the base and middle where the balls join. Stack them, and pack extra snow into any gaps. You can use rocks or buttons for eyes and a mouth, sticks for arms, and a carrot for a nose. You can also get creative, such as by using an upside-down bucket for a hat!

Add your own personal touches!

ERICA CLARK FOR STONE KITCHEN CREATIVE; GETTY IMAGES; ON LEFT PAGE: GETTY IMAGES

Word search

Can you find all these types of hats and other headwear? They are hidden horizontally, vertically, or diagonally and can be forward or backward. When you're done, read the remaining letters to get a bonus message.

BASEBALL CAP
BEANIE
BERET
BOATER
BONNET
CLOCHE
CROWN
DEERSTALKER
DERBY
FEDORA
FEZ
HOOD
KEFFIYEH
MITER
MORTARBOARD
MOUSE EARS
SLOUCH
SOMBRERO
STETSON
STOVEPIPE
SUN HAT
TIARA
TOQUE
TRILBY
TURBAN
VEIL
VISOR
YARMULKE

```
        O N E B O A T E R O
      F N A E B A H C U O L S
    M O R T A R B O A R D S
    S E O P S O D L E K B R
      T O D Y E B O N N E T A
  N O R E R B M O S S F C E N
  B V I F E A L H C O F R E R
  N E H A C L A I T S I O S W
Y A   L P N E K L U M R A Y W U T   R S
S B O L T I A R A C O D F T E N O S T E T S
O R R F E P E T W A O C M I H Q M L T L I O
  N D E O E L V L P T A H N U S V I S O R
    Z D E E R S T A L K E R A M R S
```

OFF SIDES

Make three different five-letter words by using the letters given to fill in the blanks.

E H J L T Y

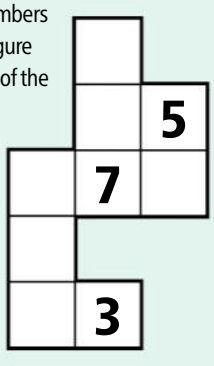
_ O U S _

_ O U S _

_ O U S _

Out of order

The numbers 1 to 9 can fit, one per square, so that no two consecutive numbers are in squares that touch in any way, even at a corner. Use the numbers already given to figure out where the rest of the numbers go.



ANSWERS CAN BE FOUND ON PAGE 29.

FILL IN THE BLANKS

Fill in the blanks in each sentence with two words so the second word is the same as the first word with one letter inserted, like THOUGH and THROUGH. (NEED A HINT? Check the bottom of the page.)

1. Our principal has always worn wild ____ on special occasions, but lately he's been wearing them three or four ____ a week!
2. At the premiere, all the film's ____ waved to the photographers before walking up the ____ that led into the theater.
3. My grandfather grew up near Cape Canaveral and remembers eating his ____ while watching the ____ of the Apollo 12 Moon mission.

Spot the difference

These two pictures of a vintage Chrysler model "300" appear to be the same, but take a closer look. There are actually five differences. Can you see them?

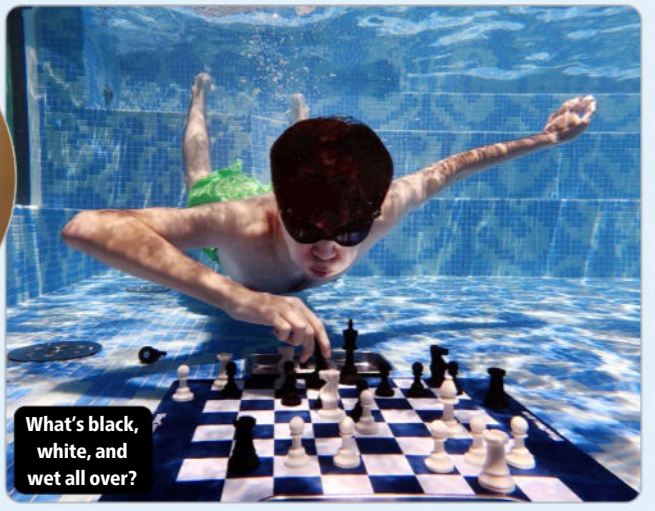
PUZZLES BY PUZZABILITY

Fill in the blanks hint: In sentence 3, the first letter of both words is L.

Tyra Banks and her confusing confection

"Hot ice cream" debuts in US

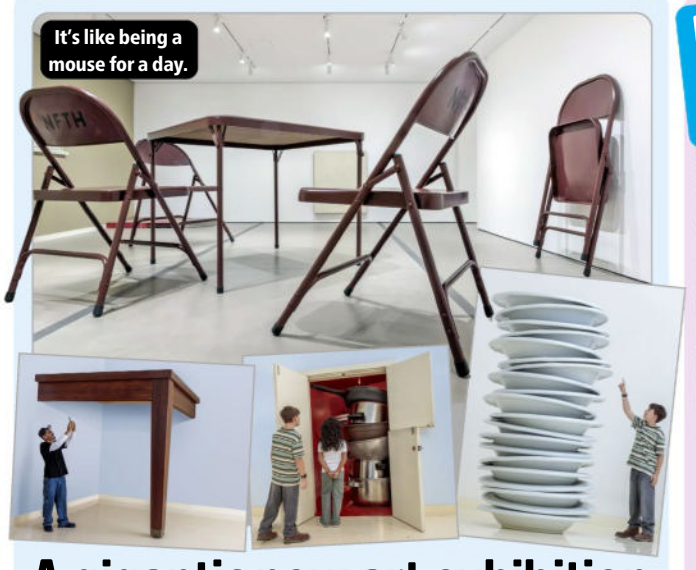
Craving ice cream but don't want to risk brain freeze? Supermodel Tyra Banks has a solution. Her pop-up shop in New York City, Smize & Dream, is serving up a viral sensation called Hot Mama. This "hot ice cream," in flavors like caramel pecan and buttered toast, is served in cups or cones and topped with whipped cream. Tasters say it's sippable like a lukewarm, thick hot chocolate. Banks, who came up with the idea when she wanted a comforting dessert on a winter night, calls it a "delicious contradiction."



What's black, white, and wet all over?

Diving into underwater chess

As if games of chess weren't challenging enough, imagine playing at the bottom of a swimming pool. Some of the world's top chess players recently did that at an event in South Africa. Diving Chess, a hybrid sport created in 2012, is played underwater on a weighted, magnetic chessboard. Players take turns diving down to make their move, then resurfacing for air while their opponent moves. Chess grandmaster Hans Niemann won the tournament to become the first American Freestyle Diving Chess champion.



It's like being a mouse for a day.

A gigantic new art exhibition

People can walk under giant furniture at an art exhibition that recently opened in Los Angeles, California. The installation features work by artist Robert Therrien (1947–2019), who was best known for creating large-scale sculptures of household items. Taking place at The Broad museum, this is the largest-ever exhibition of Therrien's work. It involves more than 120 items, including a colossal tower of dishes, a massive table and chairs, a huge cupboard filled with pots and pans, and a giant beard.

Big cheese heads to Hollywood

An organization that promotes a popular type of Italian cheese has signed with a major US talent agency. The Parmigiano Reggiano Consortium reportedly joined the United Talent Agency (UTA) so its cheese can be featured in films, TV shows, and streaming content. UTA represents many famous actors, including *Marty Supreme* star Timothée Chalamet and *Wicked*'s Cynthia Erivo. There's no word yet on when the Italian favorite will make its on-screen debut. Is this story real, or is it a cheesy lie?*

*Real! Parmigiano Reggiano, made from cow's milk, has been popular for hundreds of years. Recently, the Parmigiano Reggiano Consortium said it had signed with UTA to boost the cheese's image and "express [its] story globally."

GETTY IMAGES (3); SMIZE AND DREAM; REUTERS; JOSHUA WHITE (4); ON LEFT PAGE: GETTY IMAGES (2)

Editor's note

This week we are celebrating the 300th issue of *The Week Junior*! We're also introducing a few exciting changes. Our Book Club section (p22–23) has expanded to two pages, which will allow us to bring you even more news and recommendations related to middle-grade reading—a topic you've told us you are intensely interested in. We hope you'll enjoy our enhanced coverage of the Book of the Week, which will now include discussion questions and a longer author Q&A each week, and our two new columns: "Find your next great read" and "Guess the book this quote comes from." Our coverage of newly released video games, which formerly appeared on page 22, can now be found in our Arts and Entertainment section (p20–21), along with suggestions for fun and engaging websites, videos, and podcasts. We think this page shuffle makes the magazine even better, and we hope you agree!

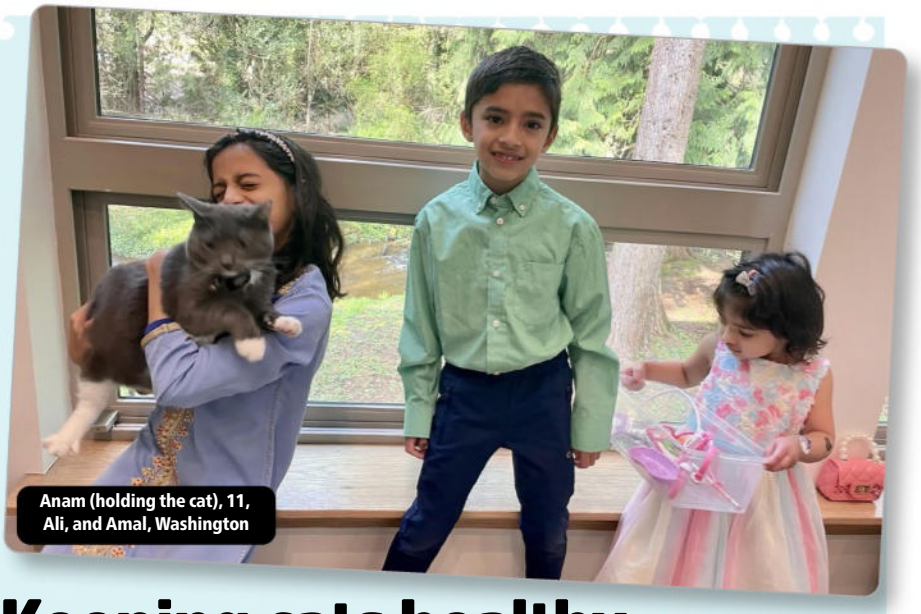
Andrea Barbalich
Editorial Director

CHARITY OF THE WEEK

Cystic Fibrosis Foundation

This organization raises awareness and funds research to treat cystic fibrosis (CF), an illness people are born with that affects the lungs, pancreas, and other organs. The group is the world's leader in the search for a cure for CF, and its programs help children and adults get the care and support they need to live full lives. It also helps train caregivers. Find out more at cff.org.

CYSTIC FIBROSIS FOUNDATION



Anam (holding the cat), 11, Ali, and Amal, Washington

Keeping cats healthy

"My love for animals turned into a mission to start my own cat food company called ProtoCat. My goal was to help cats stay strong, happy, and healthy! I make all the cat food right in our kitchen, simmering proteins like chicken, tuna, and shrimp in a tasty broth. Each batch is packed with nutrients and uses all-natural ingredients cats love. A portion of the profits from the food I sell goes to charity. I'm learning I can make a big difference—one meow at a time!"

Have you done something interesting or raised money for a cause you care about? Whatever you're up to, we want to hear about it at *hello@theweekjunior.com*.

JOKE OF THE WEEK

What do you call a line of men waiting for a haircut?

A barberqueue

Nominate a charity

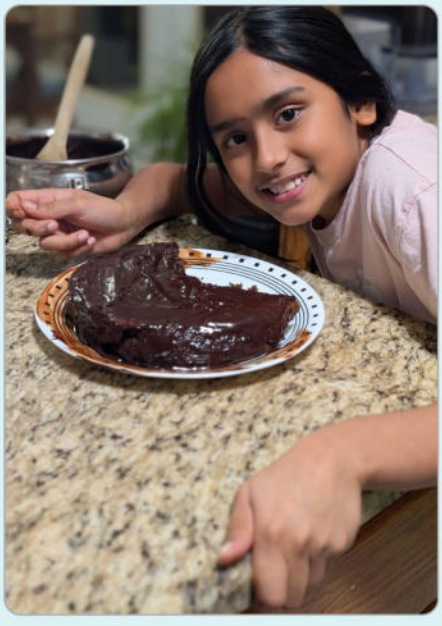
If there's a nonprofit you'd like to see featured in our Charity of the Week column (at left), we'd love to hear about it. We are eager to feature national organizations that receive top scores for effectively helping others. Write two to three sentences explaining what the group you're nominating does and why it's important. Please include a link to the organization's website, along with your first name, age, and the US state you live in. Have an adult email your nomination to *hello@theweekjunior.com*. Some groups may be featured in future issues.

THE WEEK Junior IT'S YOUR TURN Email your news, views, and photos to *hello@theweekjunior.com*.

Your turn

YOUR PHOTOS

We'd love to see pictures you've taken or pictures with you in them! Have an adult email them to us at *hello@theweekjunior.com*, along with anything you would like us to know about what's happening in the photo.



"I made the chocolate fudge cake from the How To section, and my family loved it!" Mia, 10, Missouri

"I love all the articles in *The Week Junior*, and ones about dinosaurs are my favorite!" Varun, 10, Texas

"I was so happy to see an article about Percy Jackson's new season in *The Week Junior*! I love the book series, too!" Alma, 10, Minnesota

Teacher OF THE WEEK

Teacher's Name: **Mrs. Trista**

School: **Revise Collective Microschool**

"Mrs. Trista is so nice and helps me whenever I get stuck on something. She always tries to keep things fun when she teaches. One time, we were learning about the food chain and Mrs. Trista gave us funny examples. If we don't understand something, she will try it a different way until we do. Mrs. Trista is always supportive and makes sure we never give up. That is why Mrs. Trista is the best teacher ever."

Evelyn, 13, Oklahoma

Nominate your teacher for Teacher of the Week!
Send your reason for the nomination, a photo of your teacher, and your school's name and address to *hello@theweekjunior.com*.

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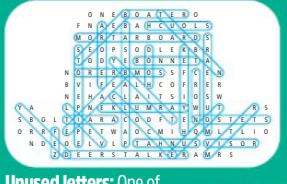
Puzzle answers (from page 26)



Off sides
house
joust
lousy

Fill in the blanks
1. ties, times
2. stars, stairs
3. lunch, launch

Unused letters: One of Napoleon's bicorn hats was sold for two million dollars.

	8	
	2	5
4	7	9
	1	
	6	3

Quiz answers (from page 30)

1 Nintxndo **2** c) Fruit fly **3** Falsx. It was in Nxw York City. **4** Canada **5** a) Producx **6** b) Xlphaba **7** Trux **8** b) Tastx **9** Falsx. Humans spxak fastxr than dogs vocalizx. **10** a) Baramos **11** Trux **12** Bxyoncé **13** a) Xarthquakx **14** Trux **15** Poozxum

We want to hear from you! To have your letters, photos, nominations, recommendations, or ideas considered for inclusion in the magazine, please include your first name, age, and state with your submission. By emailing your submission to us, you give *The Week Junior* consent to publish it in the magazine and online. Please get your parent/guardian's permission before sending anything to us.

How much of this week's news can you remember?

1 French croissants were inspired by a crescent-shaped pastry from which country?
a) Italy b) Austria c) Switzerland
a ☐ b ☐ c ☐

2 True or false? Paul Tazewell won an Academy Award for his costume designs for the movie *Wicked*.
True ☐ False ☐

3 Mattel recently released a new Barbie doll with what condition?

4 True or false? A study found that monk parakeets move quickly when they are making new friends.
True ☐ False ☐

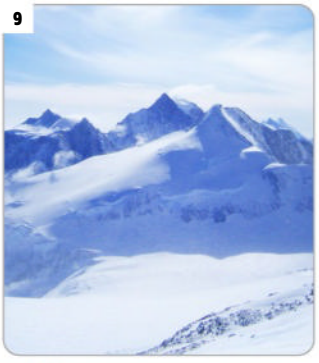
5 In the book *The Claiming*, the main characters try to stop the schemes of which villain?
a) Fire Maiden b) Ice Maiden
c) Storm Maiden
a ☐ b ☐ c ☐

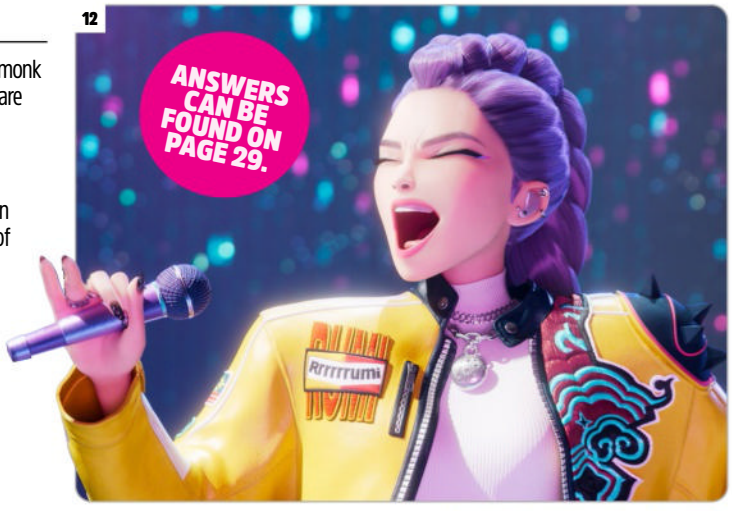
6 Who won the women's singles competition at this year's US Figure Skating Championships?
a) Alysa Liu b) Amber Glenn
c) Isabeau Levito
a ☐ b ☐ c ☐

7 African artifacts such as the Benin Bronzes inspired what new video game?

8 Mattias Krantz taught an octopus to play what musical instrument?
a) Drums b) Harp c) Piano
a ☐ b ☐ c ☐

4


9



12

11

7

9 A climber from Nepal named Hari Budha Magar reached the peak of which mountain on January 8?
a) Mount Kilimanjaro
b) Mount Everest
c) Mount Vinson
a ☐ b ☐ c ☐

10 What traditional Korean dish was recently found to boost people's immune systems?

11 True or false? Basketball player Kelsey Plum tied the Unrivaled league record by scoring 38 points in a single game.
True ☐ False ☐

12 Which song from the *KPop Demon Hunters* soundtrack won the Golden Globe Award for best original song?
a) "Golden"
b) "Strategy"
c) "Soda Pop"
a ☐ b ☐ c ☐

13 True or false? Scientists found that the human brain has seven distinct eras during a person's life.
True ☐ False ☐

14 What is the name of the new documentary by British wildlife filmmaker Bertie Gregory?

15 Which of these board games was played underwater at a recent event in South Africa?
a) Backgammon b) Checkers
c) Chess
a ☐ b ☐ c ☐

THE WEEK Junior

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